

and air pollutants will occur more rapidly. This suggests that smog and other reactive by-products of such processes will form closer to their sources — primarily in the centers of cities and industrial areas, where population densities tend to be highest. As a result, Burton says, “we would expect that attaining the federal ozone standard could become more difficult.”

However, his computer model shows, this smog equation could change with a dramatic reduction in ozone precursors such as hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides. The atmosphere's increased reactivity could alter the ozone precursors before they have time to generate much ozone. In that case, if one were to consider smog-ozone only, “it might look like climate change didn't end up hurting us at all,” Burton says. However, he notes, the reaction products generated in place of ozone are oxidants — such as peroxides and nitrogen compounds — “whose health effects may be as bad as ozone's.”

Greenhouse smog increases probably will not be restricted to urban areas, according to new computer analyses by Anne M. Thompson, a chemist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. Using current global emission rates for methane and carbon monoxide, two important greenhouse gases, she calculates that by the year 2030, total atmospheric ozone levels in the low and middle latitudes could increase about 10 percent globally, with levels highest at Earth's surface. Her data show that smog-ozone in distant suburbs and outlying areas could increase 20 to 25 percent. Even at sea, she says, ozone levels might increase 5 to 10 percent.

The ground-level ozone increases predicted by these studies justify expanding federal funding for air-quality monitoring and ozone mitigation, says John Topping, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Climate Institute. Moreover, he argues, when Clean Air Act amendments are drafted this year, they should permit the Environmental Protection Agency administrator to evaluate air-pollution-control strategies in light of their possible impact on larger environmental problems, such as greenhouse warming and stratospheric-ozone depletion.

Topping recalls being hampered by such restraints when he was staff director of EPA's office of air and radiation. He says there was a time, for instance, when regulations forced him to approve state requests to substitute chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) for volatile and chemically reactive solvents, such as perchloroethylene, because the reactive solvents directly contributed to urban air pollution and CFCs would not. Such requests struck him as ironic, he says, because at the time he was also initiating the CFC risk assessments that ultimately led to the Montreal Protocol, a treaty aimed at banning most CFC use.

— J. Raloff

Modern humans take a spin back in time

Scientists using a recently developed dating technique say anatomically modern humans apparently inhabited an Israeli cave known as Skhul about 100,000 years ago. Their conclusion, described in the April 27 *NATURE*, is consistent with reports that early modern humans were living at the nearby Qafzeh cave more than 90,000 years ago (SN: 2/27/88, p.138).

Nonetheless, the accumulating evidence for an early human presence in the Near East, more than twice as long ago as had been previously assumed, does not quell an ongoing dispute over the evolution of modern *Homo sapiens*. Some investigators say anatomically modern humans originated in Africa and spread throughout the world, replacing groups such as the Neanderthals, while others contend there was at least some interbreeding between early modern humans and Neanderthals.

Researchers had roughly dated Skhul at about 40,000 years old by comparing stone tools and the remains of animals and humans at the site with those from nearby caves.

The new age for Skhul was obtained by Christopher B. Stringer of the British Museum in London and his colleagues. They analyzed two teeth from an ancestral form of the cow or ox excavated more than 50 years ago and housed in a British Museum collection. The teeth came from sediment containing the remains of at least 10 early modern humans. Stringer's group calculated the age estimate through electron spin resonance (ESR) dating, a technique used with several archaeological samples over the last decade.

ESR measures the density of trapped electrons that gather in bone and other organic material as a result of environmental radiation after the material is buried. The technique gauges a specimen's natural radioactivity as well as sources of the radiation, such as uranium and thorium. Natural electron density is then compared with that produced by standardized doses of high-energy radiation. From this, researchers can calculate the specimen's annual radiation dose and an estimated age.

Assuming the uranium in the animal teeth was absorbed soon after burial, the researchers place Skhul's minimum age at approximately 81,000 years. A better estimate, based on the assumption that the uranium was taken up more gradually, is around 101,000 years, they contend.

These dates are nearly the same as those previously obtained at Qafzeh with ESR and another technique, thermoluminescence dating.

Anatomically modern humans appear to have inhabited the Near East about 50,000 years before entering Europe, the investigators maintain. But modern hu-

mans' relationship, if any, to early Neanderthals who lived near Skhul and Qafzeh remains unknown, Stringer and his co-workers assert. To solve that puzzle, researchers need better dates for the Neanderthal sites, which themselves have yielded some important remains (SN: 4/15/89, p.229).

Early modern humans at Skhul and Qafzeh may have briefly inhabited the area as they migrated from Africa to Asia and much later to Europe, the scientists suggest. On the other hand, modern humans and Neanderthals may have alternated or overlapped in their occupation of the Near East for 60,000 years.

— B. Bower

Bush picks science adviser

President Bush last week nominated nuclear physicist D. Allan Bromley of Yale University as his science adviser, an appointment that also would make Bromley head of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Bromley carried out pioneering studies on the structure and dynamics of nuclei and is considered the father of modern heavy-ion science. He has been a leading science spokesman as president of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics.

“I think it's an outstanding choice,” says Richard S. Nicholson, the new executive officer of the AAAS in Washington, D.C. “He's highly accomplished both as a scientist and in science policy [and] will have the respect of everybody.”

“He's a good, solid mainstream adviser in an administration that is trying to be middle of the road,” says Philip Speser, president of Foresight Science and Technology Inc., a research firm in Washington, D.C. Bush has elevated the science advisory post to the same level as the national security adviser. This means the science adviser will report directly to the President, Bromley says.

The science adviser should interject science and technology into areas that may relate only indirectly to science, such as international relations, Bromley says. “Science and technology sometimes provide an opportunity to build communication channels [between nations] . . . because scientists really do share a common language,” he says.

Bromley's appointment requires Senate confirmation, but a vote on his nomination probably won't occur until at least the end of May, says an aide to the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

— I. Wickelgren

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